

THE DEATH OF EMMANUEL MOUNIER

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Nothing is more dangerous than a certain kind of fatalism, especially in sociology, more than anywhere else, because society in the twentieth century is far too fluid for us to say categorically that the “game is rigged.” Georges Gurvitch²

Emmanuel Mounier is dead.

Even two months after his death, the time is not yet ripe for us to gauge the scope of the great loss which results from his demise. The most distracted of our readers can discover in each page of *Cité Libre*, not only the influence exercised upon each of us by the magazine *Esprit*, but also our very own determined effort to emulate its special objectivity,—which

¹Anonymous (Joseph Philippe Pierre Yves Elliott Trudeau?), “Faites vos jeux: Mounier disparaît,” *Cité Libre*, 1.1(juin, 1950): 37. Christopher Richard Wade Dettling, editor and translator, *The Death of Emmanuel Mounier*, Anonymous (Joseph Philippe Pierre Yves Elliott Trudeau?), ARCHIVE.ORG, 2018.

²Georges Gurvitch (1894–1965): See Endnote 1.

we want to elaborate even more profoundly: We have directly inherited this agenda from Emmanuel Mounier.³

The backers of *Cité Libre* had decided, from the time of their very first meetings, to send the director of *Esprit* the very first copy of *Cité Libre* that rolled-off the printing press. It is sufficient to say that *Cité Libre* was born under the banner of *Esprit*, and is faithful to the very same values for which Emmanuel Mounier fought until his very last breath.

The time has not yet ripe to determine exactly where the death of Emmanuel Mounier will leave us. We will eventually make this determination with the passage of time. But right now we will be paying homage to his memory in the best possible way by making *Cité Libre* an organ of truth, discovery and open dialogue.

Even after his death, the spirit of Emmanuel Mounier will henceforth fill all the pages of *Cité Libre*.

³See: "Our existence is always sinful, and it might almost be claimed that existence in this world is just as impossible as the act of pure good will is for Kant. We are sinful by the very fact that we exist." Emmanuel Mounier, *Existentialist Philosophies: An Introduction*, London, 1948, 20. See also: "We ought not to forget how much personalism owes to Leibnitz and to Kant, or what the dialectic of personality owes to the whole reflective effort of idealist thought." Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism*, London, 1952, xvi.

ENDNOTES

1. By the phrase “a certain kind of fatalism,” Georges Gurvitch (1894–1965) means (roughly speaking) the so-called *Hegelianism* allegedly associated with conservative and right-wing political parties in Europe, as opposed to the “fatalism” allegedly associated with the “Hegelianism” of liberal and left-wing European political parties: The first species of this Hegelianism is often alleged to promote the *bad fatalism* of pseudo-objectivity, which the French Left associated with totalitarianism and fascism: The species of “Hegelianism” which leads to the *good fatalism* of subjectivity, namely existentialist individualism or Marxian communism, upon which democracy is founded, according to the French Leftist tradition, *is ultimately based upon the French Revolution and the doctrines of Kant and French Kantianism*. The French Left often equates (and we do not merely mean the French communists, but also liberals who supported Gaullism in their fashion) “a certain kind of fatalism” with the philosophy of “Americanism” or *Yankee Imperialism*: When Georges Gurvitch cryptically says that *society in the twentieth century is far too fluid for us to say categorically that the “game is rigged”* (“*la société, en ce XXe siècle, est trop fluide pour que nous puissions affirmer catégoriquement que ‘les jeux sont faits’*”), he really means that sociological analysis, the “sociological point of view,” ultimately based upon the existentialist and Marxist interpretation of Hegel, proves that the *Third World* policy of Gaullism (post-war French Imperialism) *must* prevail: This was also undoubtedly a political and economic doctrine of

the intellectuals, the “douze sages” on the *Comité consultatif de la recherche scientifique et technique* (CCRST) of de Gaulle’s *Comité interministériel de la recherche scientifique et technique* (CIRST). Of course, the legitimacy of the distinction that Georges Gurvitch draws very much depends upon the *rational notion* of the difference between *genuine and pseudo-Hegelianism, namely the correct notion of the Hegelian dialectic*:

The best approach to problems of the sociology of the *noetic mind* (or of human spirit) and to the determination of its exact place among the various sociological disciplines, would seem to be via the levels or depth analysis of social reality. This type of analysis is inspired by the “method of inversion” (Bergson) or “phenomenological reduction” (Husserl), *i.e.*, an immanent downward reduction through successive stages towards whatever is most directly experienced in social reality ... We shall not stop to examine the Hegelian theory of the “objective spirit” and of “civil society,” which is *no more* than a *dialectical* step in the constitution of the omnipotent State, for, in comparison with the above-mentioned doctrines, this theory brings nothing new to the *sociological point of view* and, in fact, represents a considerable *retrogression*, owing to *Hegel’s statism* ... after the French Revolution, after the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* and the Napoléonic *Civil Code*, after the radical elimination of the last vestiges of feudalism, the dissolution of the estates and guilds, the suppression of the monarchy and its theocratic survivals in favour of “national sovereignty,” after the geometrical and deductive spirit of the eighteenth century had penetrated into the legal [222] system, after, finally, the triumph of the synthesis of

liberty and equality as the basis of all power.⁴ [Italics Added]

Left-leaning French existentialists and Marxists who supported Soviet communism associated their Liberal Gaullist rivals with totalitarianism and fascism, based upon their own distinction between *genuine and pseudo-Hegelianism*. The Left-leaning French existentialists and Marxists in the camp of Liberal Gaullism ("*gaullistes de gauche*" like Georges Gurvitch and *Cité Libre*), on the other hand, associated their Left-leaning French existentialist and Marxist rivals, who supported Soviet communism, with totalitarianism and fascism, based upon their own distinction between *genuine and pseudo-Hegelianism*. *All these abstract political and economic disputes are found in the many controversies on Hegel and Marx in the French media mainly beginning in the 1950s and lasting until the 1970s*. The demise of the *French Communist Party* and the rise of François Mitterrand put a definitive end to the debate, in both France and so-called French Canada, which also coincides with the rise of the Québecocracy and signalizes the end of the first phase of the *Cité Libre* ideology. *Henceforth the politics of France will be divided between left and right leaning Gaullists, namely the defenders of the power formation established in the main by the General de Gaulle and his followers at the end of the second world war*.

⁴Georges Gurvitch, *Sociology of Law*, London, 1947, 33–69–221–222. See: "Marx and Hegel remain of lasting importance for German sociology. Since the thirties, Husserl's philosophy and the phenomenological method are becoming increasingly influential and opening up *new scientific roads for sociological analyses*." Albert Salomon, "German Sociology," *Twentieth Century Sociology*, Georges Gurvitch & Wilbert E. Moore, editors, New York, The Philosophical Library, 1945, 586–614; 609.

Of course, the *pseudo and anti-Hegelians* will especially reject the above analysis based upon their own historical “facts,” the arrangement and interpretation of which very much depend upon their *specious* distinction between *genuine and pseudo-Hegelianism*: *We have discussed this controversy in our writings upon American Idealism, and outlined in some detail the nature of our argument.*⁵ [Editor]

2. Text in French: “Rien n’est plus dangereux qu’un certain fatalisme, en sociologie plus qu’ailleurs, car la société, en ce XXe siècle, est trop fluide pour que nous puissions affirmer catégoriquement que “les jeux sont faits.” Georges Gurvitch

Emmanuel Mounier disparu.

Il n’est plus temps, deux mois après sa mort, de dire la consternation où ce départ nous laisse. Le plus distrait de nos lecteurs peut vérifier dans chaque page de *Cité Libre*, non seulement l’influence qu’a exercée sur chacun de nous la revue *Esprit* mais encore un certain souci de lucidité, que nous voulons de plus en plus profond, et dont le désir nous vient en ligne droite d’Emmanuel Mounier.

Les instigateurs de *Cité Libre* avaient décidé, dès leurs premières rencontres, de faire tenir au directeur *d’Esprit* la première copie de la revue qui sortirait des presses. C’est assez dire que *Cité Libre* est née sous le signe *d’Esprit*, eu fidélité aux mêmes valeurs pour lesquelles Mounier

⁵See: Christopher Richard Wade Dettling, *Americanism: The New Hegelian Orthodoxy*, ARCHIVE.ORG, 2017. See also: Christopher Richard Wade Dettling, *Stronghold of Hegel*, MEDIUM, 2017.

s'est battu jusqu'au dernier jour.

Le temps n'est pas encore venu d'évaluer ce qu'en mourant Mounier nous laisse. Nous le ferons un jour, quand nous aurons pris le recul nécessaire. Mais tout de suite, nous croirons rendre à sa mémoire l'hommage le plus vivant qui soit possible en faisant de *Cité Libre* un lieu de vérité, de rencontre, de dialogue ouvert.

Mort, Mounier restera présent dans toute l'aventure que nous tentons aujourd'hui."

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